DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 362 522 SP 034 811

AUTHOR Bobbitt, Sharon A.
TITLE Heaven or Hell? The Teaching Environment of Beginning Teachers.
INSTITUTION National Center for Education Statistics (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Apr 93
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Atlanta, GA, April 12-16, 1993).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Beginning Teacher Induction; *Beginning Teachers; *Classroom Environment; Comparative Analysis; *Context Effect; Difficulty Level; Educational Experience; Elementary School Teachers; Elementary Secondary Education; Institutional Characteristics; Private Schools; Public Schools; Secondary School Teachers; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Characteristics; *Teaching Conditions
IDENTIFIERS *Nurturance; *Perceived Environment; Schools and Staffing Survey (NCES)

ABSTRACT

This study expands on research conducted by Bobbitt and Weaver (1992) that assessed the experience of beginning teachers in the context of the "crucible versus cradle" paradigm. Using nationally representative data on teachers from the National Center for Education Statistics' Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) of 1990-91, the analysis sought to determine those characteristics of teachers and schools that relate to how new teachers perceive their working conditions. The sample consisted of regular, full-time public school teachers (N=5,275) and regular, full-time private school teachers (N=1,459) who had 3 or fewer years of full-time teaching experience. A scale measuring the combined effects of each teacher's perceptions of their assignment difficulty and the support that the school gives to new teachers was developed from items on the SASS Public School Teachers questionnaire. Findings indicated that beginning teachers in elementary schools are much more likely to feel "nurtured" than their counterparts in secondary schools, regardless of whether they were in public or private schools, and that Black, non-Hispanic public school teachers experienced more positive teaching environments than any other racial/ethnic group. The document concludes with a discussion of implications for further research and four statistical tables. (LL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

SP

Heaven or Hell? The Teaching Environment of Beginning Teachers

A Presentation to the
American Educational Research Association
April 12, 1993

Sharon A. Bobbitt, Ph.D.
National Center for Education Statistics
U.S. Department of Education

ED 362 522

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

_____

_____

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

Introduction

The experience of the beginning teacher has been described as a "sink or swim" situation in which little assistance is provided (Adams, 1982). Stallion and Zimpher (1991) asserted that "beginners have been expected, from the first day, to instruct students and perform the same tasks as veteran teachers. These tasks were not increased gradually; rather the beginner has been assigned a full complement of teaching duties. To complicate matters, beginners learn to teach in individual cellular structures, behind their classroom doors."

Szabo (1989) proposed a "crucible or cradle" theory of the working conditions of new teachers. She argued that new teachers' experience in school can be described along two dimensions, level of difficulty of the teaching assignment and level of support. The difficulty dimension measures the extent to which the conventional wisdom about the newest teachers getting the worst kids is true. If the difficulty is "low", the teachers have students who do not misbehave and are eager to learn; "high" difficulty indicates a great deal of misbehavior and student apathy. The level of support dimension measures the extent to which new teachers perceive that they are receiving support in instructional problems and classroom management techniques. Teachers who report a "high" level of support (the "cradle") feel

SP 034 211

20

that they receive a great deal of support in their acclimatization to the school environment, including instructional support and collaboration; a "low" level of support (the "crucible") indicates a large degree of isolation felt by new teachers. This paradigm yields a two-by-two matrix characterizing the experience of the beginning teachers. Teachers with "high" difficulty and a "low" level of support categorized as "tested"; teachers with "low" difficulty and a "high" level of support are "nurtured". The other two cells are interesting also: "high" difficulty can be ameliorated by policies which provide "high" levels of support to new teachers--these teachers are "coached"; "low" difficulty combined with "low" support can lead to new teachers' feeling isolated and abandoned in the classroom--these teachers are "tested".

		Difficulty of Assignment "Low"	"High"
Support	"Low"	"ignored"	"tested"
	"High"	"nurtured"	"coached"

Other studies have shown the separate effects of these two dimensions of a new teacher's experience. Chester (1991) found that feelings of efficacy among new teachers in urban schools increased directly with the amount of collaboration that the teachers reported, controlling for the effect of resources and supervisor observations. And in a study of occupation stress in new female teachers, Schonfeld (1992) found that despite preemployment similarities "women who worked in the most adverse school environments showed the most depressive symptoms...[and] women who obtained jobs in the 'best' schools tended to show the fewest symptoms." He concluded that "adverse school conditions may have detrimental

effects on mental health and more benign work environments may be related to better mental health." Stallion and Zimpher (1991) found that classroom management was a key factor in teachers' perceptions of the school environment. They noted that "an assessment of the needs of the beginning and mentor teachers involved in the project indicated that of the ten problem domains presented, classroom management ranked second among the problems perceived by beginning teachers and fourth among the problems perceived by mentor teachers."

Bobbitt and Whitener (1992) assessed the experience of beginning teachers in the context of the "crucible versus cradle" paradigm, using a nationally representative sample of public school teachers from the National Center for Education Statistics' Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) of 1987-88. That study found that the conventional wisdom about the experience of the beginning teacher did not hold up. In fact, almost three-quarters of new public school teachers reported that they were "nurtured," a situation in which they had low difficulty and a high level of support. While about the same percentages of experienced and new teachers low difficulty, only 63% of experienced teachers also felt that they had a high level of support. The study also found that while about the same proportion of new and experienced teachers said that they had high difficulty teaching assignments, two-thirds of the new teachers in that situation reported high levels of support versus only one-third of experienced teachers. The study concluded that schools may not recognize the need of experienced teachers to also receive support in high difficulty situations.

This type of evaluation of the new teacher experience in a large, nationally representative sample complements the typical, small sample size or case study approach which is

prevalent in the literature. Analyses of large sample databases can validate the existing case study research or perhaps point case study research in new directions for further research.

To this end, the current study expands on the Bobbitt and Whitener study of 1992 using nationally representative data on teachers from the 1990-91 Schools and Staffing Survey. The present analysis focuses primarily on new teachers, and seeks to determine those characteristics of teachers and schools that relate to how new teachers perceive their working conditions.

Methodology

Sample. This paper reports the results of an analysis of 5,275 regular, full-time public school teachers and 1,459 regular, full-time private school teachers who had three or fewer years of full-time teaching experience. A scale measuring the combined effects of each teacher's perceptions of their assignment difficulty and the support that the school gives to new teachers was developed from items on the SASS Public School Teachers questionnaire.

Scale Definition. The scale was developed from two opinion items on the SASS Public School Teacher questionnaire. The first asked teachers to report their agreement with the statement "My teaching assignments are more difficult than those of other teachers at this school." This item had four possible responses: strongly agree (coded as -2), somewhat agree (coded as -1), somewhat disagree (coded as 1), and strongly disagree (coded as 2). The second item asked teachers to report their agreement "that this school is effective in

assisting new teachers in each of the following matters: a) student discipline, b) instructional methods, c) curriculum, and d) adjusting to the school environment." A mean of the responses to the four subparts of this item was calculated and means of 1.0 or less (roughly "strongly agree") were coded as 2, means from 1.1 to 2 (roughly "somewhat agree") were coded as 1, means from 2.1 to 3 (roughly "somewhat disagree") were coded as -1, and means above 3.0 (roughly "strongly disagree") were coded as -2.

These two items were then combined for each teacher, yielding a mean scale score for each sample teacher, with scores of -4 indicating the worst case scenario--a teacher who had a very difficult assignment and felt the school did not support beginning teachers at all, and scores of +4 indicating the best case scenario--a teacher who felt that they had an easy assignment relative to other teachers and felt the school gave new teachers lots of support. Scores in the middle ranges could reflect two scenarios. Either the teacher felt ambivalent about their assignment difficulty and about their support, or the teacher had offsetting scores on the two items. For example, a teacher who had a very difficult assignment but received lots of support could obtain a 0 on the scale. Table 1 shows the distribution of public and private school teachers by their scores on the scale.

Analysis. Data analysis was conducted using SAS procedures called PROC WESVAR and PROC WESREG, which use the method of balanced repeated replication (BRR) to estimate variances for data from surveys with complex sample designs. Scale means were calculated for public and private school teachers separately. The teachers were then further classified by teacher characteristics and by the type of school in which they taught in 1990-

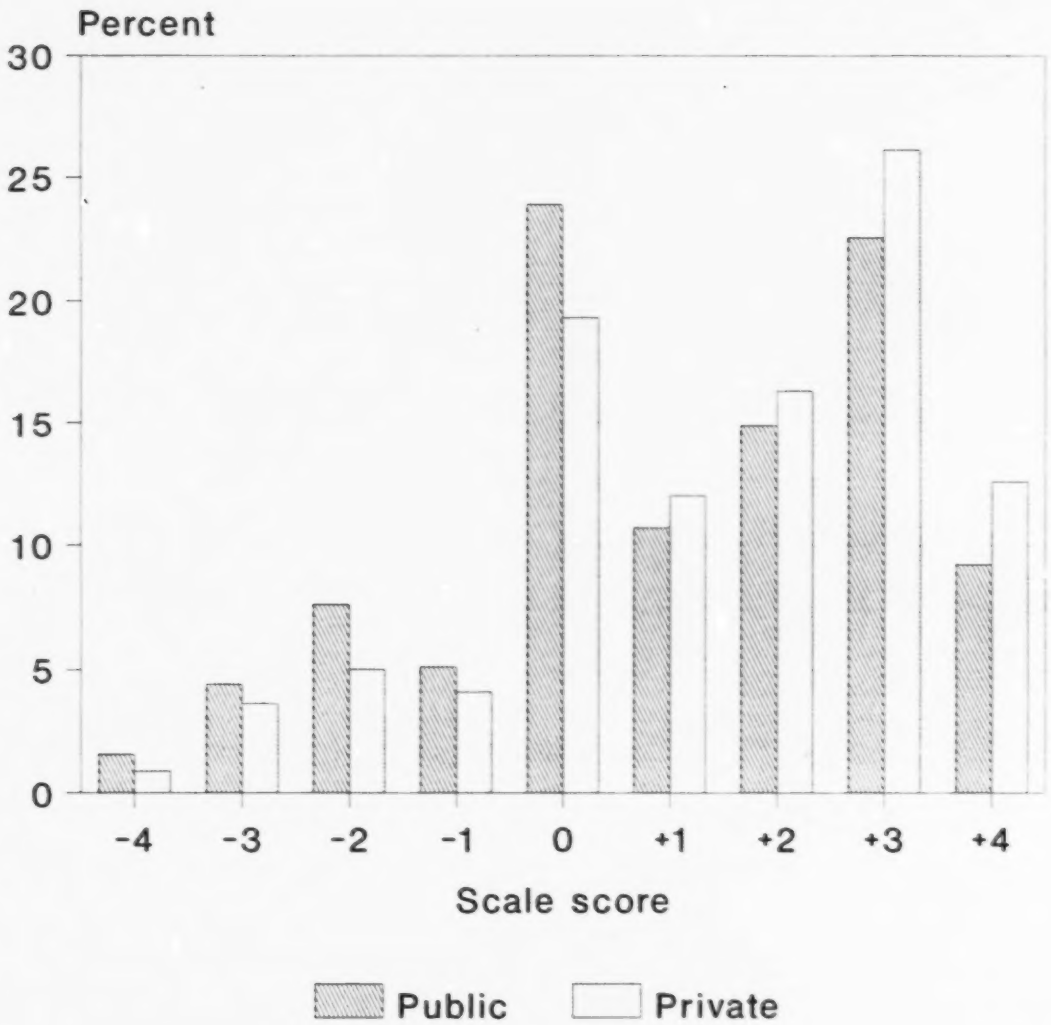
91. The teacher characteristics were years of full-time teaching experience (1 or less, 2 years, 3 years), age (25 or younger, 26 to 30, 31 to 35, 35 and older), sex, race/ethnicity, marital status, teaching level (elementary, secondary), highest degree earned (less than bachelor's, bachelor's, master's or higher), and main teaching assignment (general elementary, foreign languages, science/mathematics, special education, all other). The school classification variables were Census region (North, South, East, West), community type (urban, suburban, rural), school level (elementary, secondary, combined), program type (regular, montessori (private only), special program emphasis, special education, vocational/technical, or alternative), percent minority enrollment (less than 20%, 20% or more), and school size (less than 150, 150 to 499, 500 to 749, 750 or more).

T-tests with Bonferroni adjustments were conducted first between public and private school teachers across all school and teacher characteristics, and next within specific school and teacher variables. PROC WESVAR was used to calculate estimates and standard errors. Next, a multiple regression analysis was conducted using selected teacher characteristics as the independent variables. Another BRR software package, PROC WESREG, was used to generate the parameter estimates and their corresponding standard errors for this analysis. All of the results cited in the text are significant at the .05 level with Bonferroni adjustments, unless otherwise noted.

Selected Findings and Discussion

Bivariate analysis. A distribution of the percentage of public and private school teachers with each scale score (from -4 to +4) is shown is figure 1 and table 1. In general,

Figure 1.--Percentage distribution of public and private school teachers, by scale score: 1990-91

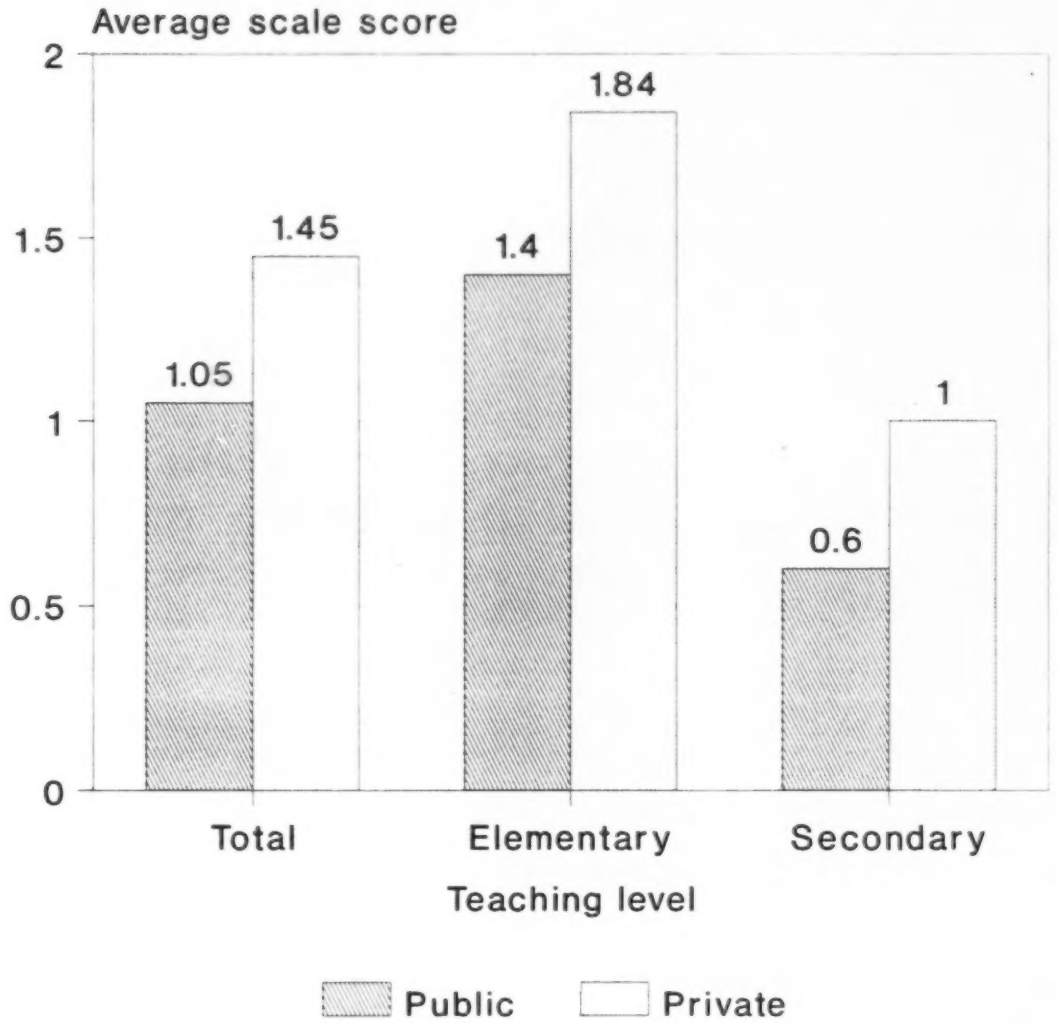


SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91

private school teachers tend to cluster towards the positive side of the scale, whereas public school teachers are more likely to fall on the 0 to negative side of the scale. Tables 2 and 3 show average scale scores for public and private school teachers by selected school and teacher characteristics, respectively. It is interesting to note, as is highlighted in Figure 2, that while private school teachers definitely score higher on the scale, on average, than public school teachers, the effect of teaching level is at least as strong as the sector effect. A lot of prior research on the teacher attitudes from SASS (McMillen, 1990; Choy, Medrich, Henke, and Bobbitt, 1992; Bobbitt, 1993; Choy, Bobbitt, Henke, Medrich, Horn, and Lieberman, forthcoming) have shown that private school teachers are a lot happier and have better attitudes towards their profession than public school teachers. Yet this beginning teacher experience scale seems to indicate that for new teachers, at least, being an elementary teacher instead of a secondary teacher has at least as much, if not more, impact than whether they are in a public or a private school.

A closer look at the effects of school characteristics on teachers' perceptions of their support level and assignment difficulty, as defined by their average scale score, reveals that very few school characteristics are significantly related to average scale score. The average scale score of public school teachers does not vary across the type of community in which the school is located, the percent minority enrollment of the school, the school size, or the type of program the school offers. Public school teachers in the South score higher, on average, than teachers in the Midwest or West, and teachers in elementary schools score higher than teachers in either secondary or combined schools.

Figure 2.--Average scale score for public and private school teachers, by teaching level: 1990-91

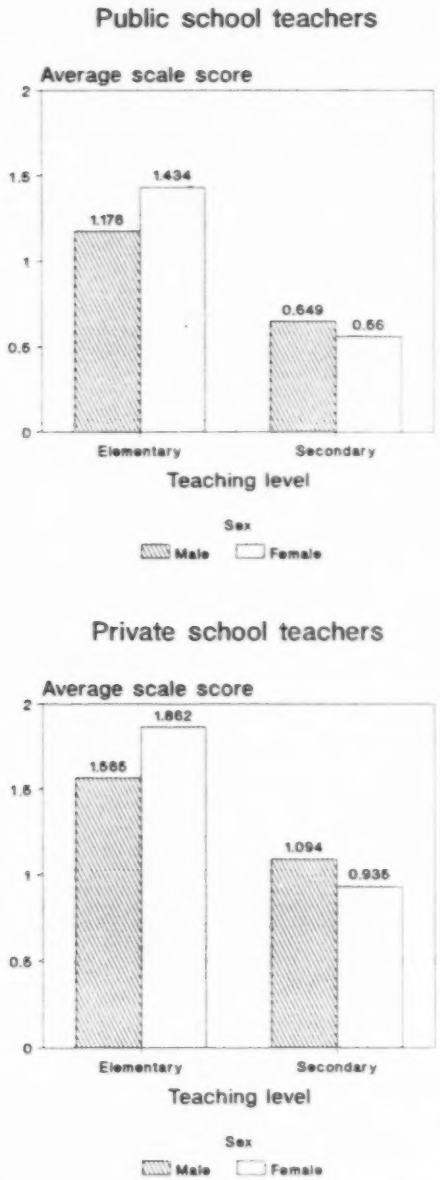


SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91

The analysis of the relationship of scale scores to teacher characteristics is shown in table 3. While few teacher characteristics were related to average scale scores among private school teachers, several factors were related among public school teachers. Surprisingly, for this sample of beginning teachers, neither years of full-time teaching experience nor teacher age had any relationship to average scale score among either public or private school teachers. Teaching level, that is, whether the teachers taught elementary or secondary school students, did have a big impact on scale scores, however, in both sectors. Teachers in elementary schools were much more likely to report a positive teaching environment than teachers in secondary schools. This effect will be explored in more depth in the discussion of the regression analysis, below. In addition to teaching level, the sex of the teacher was also related to average scale score, with female teachers reporting, on average, more positive teaching environments than male teachers. This effect changes somewhat, however, when sex is combined with teaching level. As shown in figure 3, while male and female elementary teachers have higher scale scores than male and female secondary teachers, and while female teachers in elementary school have higher scale scores than male teachers in elementary schools, female teachers in secondary schools report the least positive teaching environment. Consonant with this finding is the result that teachers of general elementary classes reported higher scale scores than teachers of any other subject. And one other interesting finding among public school teachers is that black, non-Hispanic teachers reported more positive teaching environments than any other racial/ethnic group (figure 4).

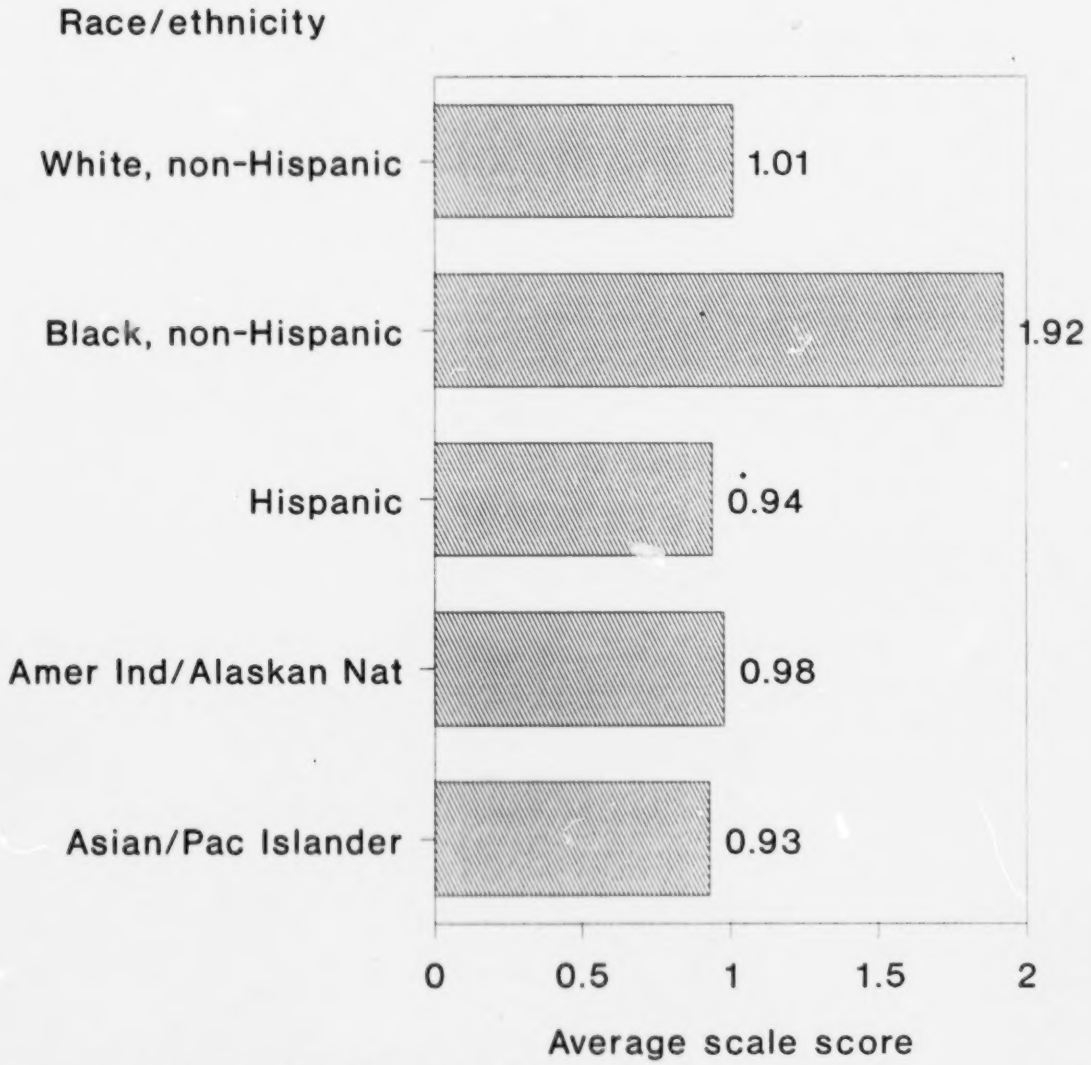
Regression analysis. Three basic models and two complete models were tested using PROC WESREG to estimate regression coefficients and their standard errors in multiple

Figure 3.--Average scale score for public and private school teachers, by sex and teaching level: 1990-91



SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91

Figure 4.--Average scale score for public school teachers, by race/ethnicity: 1990-91



SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91

regression. Because sector (public/private) had been found to be a dominant factor in several prior studies of teacher attitudes, the first basic model had scale as the dependent variable and sector only as the independent variable. Although this model was significant, it accounted for less than one percent of the variance in the dependent variable. When teaching level was added to the analysis for the second basic model, however, the amount of variance accounted for increase to almost 5 percent (table 4). The third basic model added the variables age, years of full-time teaching experience, highest degree earned. In addition to these variables, the two complete models added teacher salary (model 4) or teacher's report of student achievement level (model 5). Although sex was significantly related to average scale score in the bivariate analysis, its effect disappeared in the multivariate analysis once controlling for sector and level, so it was removed from the final models.

One of the most interesting findings of this regression analysis is the relative impact of teaching level on teacher's average scale score versus the sector effect. As mentioned previously, sector was found to be the dominant predictor of teacher attitudes in prior research, with private school teachers reporting that they were happier on a lot of measures than public school teachers. In this analysis, however, the effect of teaching level, after controlling for sector, was still almost twice the size of the sector effect. This suggests that beginning teachers in elementary schools are much more likely to feel "nurtured" than their counterparts in secondary schools, regardless of whether they are in public or private schools.

Neither teacher salary nor their perceptions of the achievement level of their students relative to other students at the school had any additional predictive value for scale scores, after holding the other teacher characteristics constant.

Future research. Several interesting questions remain after this analysis. How do the classroom experiences of older, more experienced teachers differ from those of novice teachers? Why is teaching level so important in this analysis? What are elementary schools doing to help nurture their new teachers and why aren't secondary school following similar models? Why are black, non-Hispanic teachers more positive towards their classroom situations than teachers of other racial/ethnic groups, and does it relate to the characteristics of the schools that black teachers teach in? What happens to teachers who score very low on the scale (the ones in very bad classroom situations with low support)? Do they leave teaching at a higher rate than those who score higher on the scale? An assessment of the career decisions that teachers with various scale scores make could be conducted using the Teacher Followup Survey from SASS. If sample sizes permit, an analysis of relative rate of leaving the profession could be determined for teachers with each of the nine scale scores. This analysis would permit an assessment of the ameliorating effect of high support in difficult classroom assignments as measured by teacher attrition.

Table 1.--Percentage distribution of public and private school teachers, by scale score: 1990-91

	Public		Private	
Scale score	%	S.E.	%	S.E.
-4	1.6	0.25	0.9	0.31
-3	4.4	0.48	3.6	0.69
-2	7.6	0.54	5.0	0.71
-1	5.1	0.50	4.1	0.79
0	23.9	0.91	19.3	1.44
1	10.7	0.64	12.0	1.39
2	14.9	0.81	16.3	1.17
3	22.6	0.78	26.1	1.89
4	9.2	0.64	12.6	1.14

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91

Table 2.--Average scale scores for new teachers, by sector and selected school characteristics: 1990-91

	Estimate	Standard error	Sample size
Public total	1.05	0.044	5,275
Community type			
Central city	1.12	0.074	1,044
Urban fringe/large town	1.15	0.089	1,038
Rural/small town	1.00	0.059	2,990
Percent minority enrollment			
Less than 20%	1.11	0.063	2,693
Greater than or equal to 20%	1.04	0.059	2,379
School level			
Elementary	1.33	0.055	2,100
Secondary	0.56	0.066	2,373
Combined	0.83	0.154	599
School size			
Less than 150	1.02	0.174	615
150 to 499	1.12	0.079	1,841
500 to 749	1.18	0.090	1,046
750 or more	0.94	0.062	1,570
Census region			
Northeast	1.12	0.111	505
Midwest	0.92	0.081	1,261
South	1.25	0.074	1,889
West	0.78	0.094	1,620
Program type			
Regular	1.10	0.042	4,619
Special emphasis	0.51	0.239	179
Special education	1.07	0.282	126
Vocational/technical	0.96	0.225	106
Alternative	0.27	0.374	42

Table 2.--Average scale scores for new teachers, by sector and selected school characteristics: 1990-91--continued

	Estimate	Standard error	Sample size
Private total	1.45	0.069	1,459
Community type			
Central city	1.52	0.095	607
Urban fringe/large town	1.22	0.130	427
Rural/small town	1.66	0.154	292
Percent minority enrollment			
Less than 20%	1.47	0.091	845
Greater than or equal to 20%	1.43	0.111	481
School level			
Elementary	1.63	0.080	739
Secondary	0.85	0.150	262
Combined	1.45	0.142	325
School size			
Less than 150	1.54	0.143	420
150 to 499	1.44	0.099	695
500 to 749	1.49	0.269	123
750 or more	1.26	0.180	88
Census region			
Northeast	1.47	0.137	370
Midwest	1.16	0.137	409
South	1.66	0.120	353
West	1.47	0.152	327
Program type			
Regular	1.47	0.072	1,118
Montessori	1.95	0.356	31
Special emphasis	1.59	0.402	56
Special education	1.09	0.213	75
Vocational/technical	--	--	--
Alternative	1.24	0.521	45

NOTE: With the exception of the totals and the classification by Census region, this table excludes sample teacher cases whose schools were nonrespondents to the SASS school survey.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91.

Table 3.--Average scale scores for new teachers, by sector and selected teacher characteristics: 1990-91

	Estimate	Standard error	Sample size
Public total	1.05	0.044	5,275
Years of full-time teaching experience			
1 year or less	1.16	0.061	1,923
2 years	1.04	0.097	1,756
3 years	0.95	0.086	1,596
Age			
25 or younger	1.11	0.074	1,262
26 to 30	0.94	0.080	1,748
31 to 35	0.94	0.123	759
36 and older	1.19	0.090	1,506
Sex			
Male	0.79	0.084	1,610
Female	1.13	0.057	3,665
Race/ethnicity			
White, non-Hispanic	1.01	0.051	4,502
Black, non-Hispanic	1.92	0.177	207
Hispanic	0.94	0.191	249
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.98	0.282	176
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.93	0.187	141
Marital status			
Married	1.14	0.054	3,115
Widowed/divorce/separated	1.20	0.128	443
Never married	0.87	0.070	1,717
Teaching Level			
Elementary	1.40	0.066	2,106
Secondary	0.60	0.054	3,169
Highest degree earned			
Less than bachelor's	1.54	0.218	84
Bachelor's	1.08	0.047	4,442
Master's or higher	0.86	0.109	749
Main teaching assignment			
General elementary	1.66	0.068	1,489
Foreign languages	0.36	0.329	136
Science/mathematics	0.74	0.097	852
Special education	0.16	0.157	646
All other	0.91	0.135	349

Table 3.--Average scale scores for new teachers, by sector and selected teacher characteristics: 1990-91--continued

	Estimate	Standard error	Sample size
Private total	1.45	0.068	1,459
Years of full-time teaching experience			
1 year or less	1.50	0.124	606
2 years	1.41	0.110	468
3 years	1.42	0.125	385
Age			
25 or younger	1.30	0.133	456
26 to 30	1.45	0.125	465
31 to 35	1.29	0.240	172
36 and older	1.67	0.113	366
Sex			
Male	1.17	0.155	367
Female	1.53	0.078	1,092
Race/ethnicity			
White, non-Hispanic	1.43	0.071	1,302
Black, non-Hispanic	1.49	0.472	45
Hispanic	1.90	0.417	53
American Indian/Alaskan Native	--	--	--
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.37	0.433	49
Marital status			
Married	1.53	0.098	718
Widowed/divorce/separated	1.13	0.318	90
Never married	1.40	0.101	651
Teaching Level			
Elementary	1.84	0.086	811
Secondary	1.00	0.118	648
Highest degree earned			
Less than bachelor's	2.60	0.209	108
Bachelor's	1.38	0.078	1,120
Master's or higher	1.12	0.199	231
Main teaching assignment			
General elementary	1.93	0.092	715
Foreign languages	1.17	0.246	60
Science/mathematics	0.72	0.192	197
Special education	0.66	0.518	58
All other	--	--	--

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91.

Table 4.--Regression coefficients for five models predicting teacher's scale score: 1990-91

Independent variables	Parameter estimates	P-level	Overall F test for the model
Model 1			
Intercept	0.66	***	
Sector (1=public, 2=private)	0.40	***	***
Model 2			
Intercept	1.80	***	
Sector (1=public, 2=private)	0.42	***	
Teaching level (1=elementary, 2=secondary)	-0.82	***	***
Model 3			
Intercept	2.22	***	
Sector (1=public, 2=private)	0.40	***	
Teaching level (1=elementary, 2=secondary)	-0.79	***	
Teacher age	0.01	***	
Years of teaching experience	-0.10	*	
Highest degree earned	-0.33	***	***
Model 4			
Intercept	2.41	***	
Sector (1=public, 2=private)	0.33	***	
Teaching level (1=elementary, 2=secondary)	-0.79	***	
Teacher age	0.02	***	
Years of teaching experience	-0.10	*	
Highest degree earned	-0.29	***	
Salary	0.00	N.S.	***
Model 5			
Intercept	2.16	***	
Sector (1=public, 2=private)	0.40	***	
Teaching level (1=elementary, 2=secondary)	-0.79	***	
Teacher age	0.01	***	
Years of teaching experience	-0.10	*	
Highest degree earned	-0.33	***	
Achievement level of students	0.02	N.S.	***

* p<.05
** p<.025
*** p<.001
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 1990-91.

Bibliography

Adams, R. "Teacher Development: A look at changes in teacher perceptions and behaviors across time." Journal of Teacher Education, 32(5), 1982.

Bobbitt, S.A. "What are the Most Serious Problems in Schools?" Issue Brief, National Center for Education Statistics (IB-3-93), January, 1993.

Chester, Mitchell D. "Changes in Attitudes within First-Year Teachers in Urban Schools." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, April 1991).

Choy, S.P., Bobbitt, S.A., Henke, R.R., Medrich, E.A., Horn, L.J., and Lieberman, J.L. America's Teachers: Profile of a Profession, National Center for Education Statistics, forthcoming.

Choy, S.P., Medrich, E.A., Henke, R.R. and Bobbitt, S.A. Schools and Staffing in the United States: A Statistical Profile, 1987-88, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES 92-120), July, 1992.

McMillen, M.M. "Characteristics of Public and Private School Teachers." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Boston, MA, 1990).

Schonfeld, Irvin S. "A Longitudinal Study of Occupational Stressors and Depressive Symptoms in First-Year Teachers." Teaching and Teacher Education, 7(3), 1992.

Stallion, Brenda K. and Zimpher, Nancy L. "Classroom Management Intervention: The Effects of Training and Mentoring on the Inductee Teacher's Behavior." Action in Teacher Education, 13(1), Spring 1991.

Szabo, Margaret A. "Crucible or Cradle: A Typology of the Working Conditions of New Teachers." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, April 1989).

Technical Notes

Introduction

The data for this presentation were collected on the Public and Private School Questionnaires and the Public and Private School Teacher Questionnaires, four of the seven questionnaires comprising the 1990-91 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), a survey developed by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, and conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

The SASS was a mail survey which collected public and private sector data on the Nation's elementary and secondary teaching force, aspects of teacher supply and demand, teacher workplace conditions, characteristics of school administrators, and school policies and practices. The seven questionnaires of the SASS are as follows:

1. The Teacher Demand and Shortage Questionnaire for Public School Districts.
2. The Public School Administrator Questionnaire.
3. The Private School Administrator Questionnaire.
4. The Public School Questionnaire.
5. The Private School Questionnaire.
6. The Public School Teachers Questionnaire.
7. The Private School Teachers Questionnaire.

Sample selection

The 1990-91 SASS sample included 5,515 public school districts, 9,586 public schools (and their principals), 3,270 private schools (and their principals), and 56,051 public and 9,166 private school teachers.

A list which included all full-time and part-time teachers, itinerant teachers, and long-term substitutes was obtained from each sample school. Within each school, teachers were stratified by experience; one stratum included new teachers, and a second stratum included all other teachers. New teachers were those who, counting the 1990-91 school year, were in the first, second, or third year of their teaching career in either public or private school. Within each teacher stratum, teachers were sorted by subject (Elementary--General Elementary Education, Special Education, other; Secondary--Mathematics, Science, English, Social Science, Vocational Education, other).

Data collection

The Teacher Questionnaires were mailed to the sampled schools in the Winter of 1990-91. Approximately six weeks after the mailout, a second set of questionnaires was sent to sample teachers who had not returned the first questionnaire. A telephone follow-up was conducted during the Spring of 1991.

Questionnaire response rates

Final weighted response rates were 95.3 percent for the Public School Questionnaire, 83.9 percent for the Private School Questionnaire, 90.3 percent for the Public School Teachers Questionnaire and 84.3 percent for the Private School Teachers Questionnaire.

Imputation procedures

All items on the school and teacher questionnaires were imputed for nonresponse first by using data from other items on the questionnaire then by using a "hot deck" procedure to impute data from a respondent with similar characteristics. All of the analyses presented in this report use imputed as well as actual questionnaire data. Noninterview adjustment factors

were used during the data weighting process to compensate for data missing because the sample case was a noninterview.

Standard errors

The estimates in these tables are based on samples and are subject to sampling variability. Standard errors were estimated using a balanced repeated replication procedure that incorporates the design features of this complex sample survey. The standard errors provide indications of the accuracy of each estimate. If all possible samples of the same size were surveyed under the same conditions, an interval of 1.96 standard errors below to 1.96 standard errors above a particular statistic would include the universe value in approximately 95 percent of the cases. Note, however, that the standard errors in the tables do not take into account the effects of biases due to item nonresponse, measurement error, data processing error, or other systematic error.

Definition of teacher

For purposes of this report, a teacher was any full-time regular teacher whose primary assignment was teaching in any of grades K-12. Itinerant teachers were not included, nor were long-term substitutes who were filling the role of a regular teacher on an indefinite basis.

For More Information

For more information about this report, contact Sharon A. Bobbitt, Elementary and Secondary Education Statistics Division, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 555 New Jersey Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C., 20208-5651, telephone (202) 219-1461.